



## “Salty Disciples” Luke 14:25-35

**Idea:** The cost of discipleship is high, but it produces a salty disciple who brings zest and gusto to life.

**Intro:** The writer of Ecclesiastes wisely said, *“There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This...is from the hand of God”* (Eccl 2:24). I take this verse literally when enjoying a wonderful steak dinner. It is hard to beat a medium-rare ribeye garnished with a loaded baked potato, roasted asparagus, and a garden salad. Combine all that with a glass of sweet tea, and the combination of those flavors will make your taste buds stand up and shout the halleluiah chorus. Those flavors draw you to the dinner table. On the flipside, no one is drawn to a bland dinner table.

There is one distinct ingredient that adds rich flavor to what could be a rather tasteless meal. It is salt, so my favorite steak dinner is not a good choice for those of you who struggle with high blood pressure. However, for those who can enjoy a little salt in moderation, it will change your life for the better. Such is the case in the teaching of Jesus that we are examining today. Now, He is not going to give us instructions on how to prepare a flavorful meal, but He will explain how our lives can and should be full of gospel flavor. We are going to see what it takes for us to be salty disciples.

Read Luke 14:25-35.

**Inquiry:** We find Jesus here continuing to move toward Jerusalem (9:51), where He was determined to offer His life as a sacrifice (13:33). As He traveled in that direction and ministered to people in the villages and along the roads, many people followed Him (14:25). They came to Him because of His Kingdom preaching and power. Many of those who followed Jesus were people who simply came to watch the spectacle. They wanted to see the celebrity as He passed through town. Maybe they wanted to receive an easy meal, see their relative healed, or experience the supernatural. Whatever their reasons, Jesus gave them a reality check as He laid out in unforgettable terms the cost of being a disciple.

This is not the first time Jesus has discussed the topic. He has laid out what it means to be His disciple many times before. One of the clearest explanations of this came on the heels of Peter’s great confession of faith in Caesarea Philippi. There Jesus explained that a disciple is one who takes up his cross daily and follows Him (9:21-27). So, we can simply define a disciple as “one who follows a teacher.” Specifically, a disciple of Jesus Christ is one who walks in His footsteps, willingly experiencing many of the same things the Lord has experienced and doing what He has done. Therefore, any would-be disciple who listened to the Lord would understand that discipleship would cost him dearly, though the benefit of following Christ would be worth the price.

So, great crowds were accompanying Jesus, and surely many people believed this to be a good thing. Jesus, on the other hand, was never concerned about the size of the crowds. His only concern was that they were too large. He seemed to go out of His way to winnow away the spectators, so that only those who had truly answered the call to follow remained. It does not take much effort to gather a crowd. Conversely, it is quite difficult to build a church. One is comprised of watchers and the other of witnesses. One is in it for what he can get; the other is in it for what he can give. The call to follow Jesus is a call to lay one's life down for His glory. When a person willingly follows Jesus and His suffering, then he or she can and should expect to pay a great price. That high cost, however, will make a salty disciple who brings flavor and preservation to others. We discover in these verses three characteristics of a salty disciple.

### **1. Love Jesus preeminently. (vs. 26)**

One of the great distinctions of biblical teaching that is contrary to other religious and secular thought is the focus on family. Moses commanded God's people to "*Honor your father and mother*" (Ex 20:12). Jesus affirmed his teaching and added to it (Mark 7:9-13). Paul commanded Christian husbands to "*love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*" (Eph 5:25). Jesus also modeled incredible love and acceptance toward children, which was counter-cultural at the time (Mark 10:13-16). Likewise, He called on people to love and be reconciled to their brothers (Matt 5:24). Therefore, since the Bible places such emphasis on loving family well, then we dare not interpret Jesus' words in verse 26 to mean that Christians should literally hate their family and lives so that they can follow Christ. We must never make the mistake of thinking that the Bible contradicts itself. It never does. What Jesus was saying paradoxically was that Christians love for Him must be so great and so pervasive that their natural love of self and family pales in comparison.

His words are not to be interpreted literally as a carnal hatred. Instead, metaphorically, Jesus is calling on His disciples to make family, self, and every other love a distant second in priority to Him. Our love for Jesus should be so great that our love for others seems like hate in comparison. This preeminent love and affection for Jesus will mean that we prioritize His will and calling over and above everything else, including family. When we love Jesus preeminently, He is our focus, devotion, and object of worship.

As Christians, we believe in the family. We treasure and strive to preserve the family. It is a biblical priority, but it must never become an idol. Through the family, God teaches and develops us, but the family is not God. Likewise, the Bible speaks much about personhood and the value of a person being created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), but we are not God. And so, we must never allow self to become an idol. Instead, as Christians who desire to be salty disciples, we must be willing to leave family and reprioritize our lives in ways that make no sense to a watching world, all because we love Jesus preeminently.

### **2. Bear their cross daily. (vs. 27)**

The cross was an instrument of execution. It was a favorite instrument of Rome to dispense justice and deter rebellion. The people accompanying Jesus were fully acquainted with the Roman cross, so they understood the word picture. Jesus was calling those who would be His disciples to join Him in suffering and willingly lay down their lives.

Every disciple has a cross to bear, so we must be willing to pick it up and carry it daily (Luke 9:23). Discipleship requires a cross. It first requires the cross of Christ. Through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection we are made right with God by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9). It also requires our own cross. Following Jesus is not easy. It was never meant to be. Jesus said, "*A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master*" (Matt 10:24). In Matthew 10, Jesus was sending out the

twelve to preach and to heal. As He sent them out, He warned them about the persecution they would face simply because they were His disciples. He was calling them to bear their own cross.

The cross symbolizes our dying to self. It symbolizes our joining with the Savior in His suffering so that the Kingdom is advanced. Jesus' words here specify that cross-carrying for the disciple is essential and not incidental. Now, each of our crosses looks different, but the commonality we all share is that salty disciples willingly die to self.

### 3. Cut earthly ties completely. (vs. 33)

Not only must any would-be disciple love Jesus in such a way that it makes love for family and others look like hatred and willingly put himself on a cross each and every day, but the would-be, salty disciple must also *“renounce all that he has.”* Jesus' invitation to the Kingdom is costly.

The Apostle Paul knew very well the cost of discipleship. When he met Jesus on the Damascus Road, his life trajectory was turned upside down. He was well on his way to becoming a highly influential and powerful member of the Pharisees. Jesus changed all of that. Following Jesus meant he had to cut those earthly ties completely.

Read Philippians 3:7-11.

The life of a salty disciple is not easy. As Paul indicated, it always comes with a portion of suffering.

C. S. Lewis offered some good thoughts on this reality in his book *Mere Christianity*. He said:

“The Christian way is different...Christ says, ‘Give me all. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. I don’t want to drill the tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked – the whole outfit.’”

Salty disciples understand that following Jesus means all earthly ties are cut. Their first allegiance is to Jesus and His Kingdom. Obviously, this is a high cost. It is a price that some will not be willing to pay, which Jesus understood. In verses 28-32, He called on the people in the crowd who were following Him to count the cost.

Salty disciples love Jesus preeminently, bear their cross daily, and cut earthly ties completely. Have you counted the cost for what that looks like in your life?

Four Questions:

- 1) What do I love more than Jesus?
- 2) What do I fear or avoid as a disciple?
- 3) What am I unwilling to give up to follow Jesus?
- 4) What in my life keeps me from being distinct from people who do not know Christ?

**Conclusion:** Salt adds flavor and works as a preservative. Jesus said it *“is good.”* However, if salt loses its saltiness, then is worthless. Chemically, we know that salt is a compound. It is sodium chloride. It cannot lose its composition or saltiness, but its flavor can be mixed and diluted by other minerals. This dilution is what Jesus is referring to.

Christian, you have been called into a saving relationship with Jesus. He has redeemed you by nailing your sins to His cross and paying the redemptive price for them. You have been cleansed of all sin. You have been invited into eternal fellowship with Him within His Kingdom. You have been granted sonship in the family of

God. In this new life, Jesus requires that you follow Him. You are to love Him preeminently, bear your cross daily, and cut earthly ties completely. When you live this way, you will be a salty disciple that adds rich, gospel flavor to those around you. You will also be a gospel preservative to those around you. The death and decaying that is at work in the lives of those outside of Christ will be reversed through your gospel witness.

Are you a salty disciple? Are these three characteristics present in you? If not, then you probably need a better answer to one or all of the four questions asked earlier.